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LATIN LEAFLET

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gain if he is straightway taught to pronounce the same words

"Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris
"Italiam, fati profugus," etc.

The change of accent cannot but destroy some ripening flavors, and seems worth getting rid of, if possible.

If the problem were merely theoretical, it would be easy. The ideal teacher and his class after him would pronounce their Latin, from "mensa" up, with the leisurely rhythmic march of a Forum oration, the accents floating lightly as bubbles on the steady stream of longs and shorts. The first line of Vergil, read as Ciceronian prose, would delight the ingenuous class by turning out to be verse—felt rather than analyzed. But, unhappily, scarcely one teacher in a hundred habitually pronounces prose Latin as the "First Book" introductions tell him to. So pop goes the theory.

Yet though so few can read prose quantitatively, there are many teachers who in reading Latin poetry can keep both prose accents and verse-ictus distinct to their own ears, and find the movement far more beautiful than the hammering of mere scansion. They have learned quantity by metre, not metre by quantity. To a practised hearer, indeed, a familiar rhythm does not need much emphasis beyond that which the correct time gives. And just here lies the great pitfall for the enthusiast. He forgets how he himself learned the trick; so, hearing his class read smoothly and expressively the metre he so readily recognizes, he supposes that they feel the pulse of it as delicately as he does—till some suspicious slip makes him call for formal scansion. Then he finds that to most of them the rhythm has grown quite nebulous, and they merely feel as if they were reading Whitman.

It is a case of Scylla and Charybdis to avoid both the galvanic and the hazy style of reading. Only a few practical suggestions can be here offered.

In the first place, a class cannot be made too plainly to understand the structure of the hexameter, and the mechanical trick of scanning at sight. With the minimum of rules and the warning to work always from the beginning of a line, the knack is readily caught, and must never be allowed to weaken. The movement of the English hexameter can never be assumed as known.

Pages of "Evangeline" in sing-song concert are no waste of time, as is often proved by the vague results when an advanced Vergil class try to write the measure in English. Till any line of the lesson can be readily "pounded" out on demand, there is small profit in the pupil's attempting anything harder.

The Scylla on this side is, of course, that he will be satisfied forever with this jog trot. The best safeguard, however, is just the exaggeration of its mechanical character, while parallel with the class's daily scansion goes from the first just as spirited and well-phrased reading as the teacher can give. It takes but a minute to read the day's lesson to the class in the strongest possible contrast to their own manner. To read a finished book aloud at a sitting is a pleasant form of preliminary review which fortunately precludes by its rapidity even silent translation. As the ear becomes trained to hear sound and sense together, the pupils' own attempts really to read may be permitted. They will have curiously different success. A good way for the beginner is to commit a few lines to memory and practise until the dactyls and spondees no longer absorb his attention. Endless perseverance with constant harking back on every suspicion of inaccuracy to the old mechanical scansion will soon give most encouraging results, provided it is borne in mind that the object is not to make show readers, but merely to give that perception of poetic form in Latin which alone makes literary appreciation possible.

The real point is not the exact method employed. Given any enthusiastic teacher who can read aloud after some fashion and loves to do it. Let him be given time enough with his class and they will most of them do the same. That it is worth while to take time for it is what is urged. Considerable grammatical and topical work will be crowded out. But it may be more in the line of secondary education to teach a pupil to do something than to add to his store of facts. To read and love one book of the Aeneid till the lines ring in one's ears, and any English medium becomes a mere nuisance, is conceivably a better introduction to the spirit of antiquity; certainly a more enriching piece of personal culture than to parse, annotate and passably translate the whole twelve.

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